

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ABU DH 01325 01 OF 02 101422Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 /082 W
-----060206 101455Z /64

R 101116Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7809
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1325

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TC
SUBJECT: MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED BREACHES IN CON
STITUTION

REFS: (A) ABU DHABI 286, (B) ABU DHABI 346, (C) ABU DHABI 1100

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE HAS BEEN FORMED TO
INVESTIGATE ALLEGED CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS. THIS STEP IS IN
APPARENT
RESPONSE TO CONTINUING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH
ZAYID OF ABU DHABI AND HIS VICE PRESIDENT SHAIKH RASHID OF DUBAI
OVER FEBRUARY 1 MILITARY REORGANIZATION DECREED BY ZAYID. RASHID
HAS REPORTEDLY REQUESTED CONSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW AND REVERSION TO LOOSER CONFEDERAL SYSTEM IN WHICH
INDIVIDUAL EMIRATES WOULD PRESERVE GREATER AUTONOMY INCLUDING
RIGHT TO MAINTAIN OWN ARMIES. TALK OF POSSIBLE DUBAI SECESSION
FROM FEDERATION IS GROWING AND HAS SURFACED IN INTERNATIONAL
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PAGE 02 ABU DH 01325 01 OF 02 101422Z

PRESS. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE NEITHER ZAYID NOR RASHID REALLY
WISH TO SEE BREAKUP OF UNION NOR DO POWERFUL UAE NIEGHBORS
LIKE SAUDIS AND THE SHAH. IF NECESSARY, ZAYID LIKELY TO TURN
TO THEM AND PERHAPS TO US AS WELL TO INTERVENE DIPLOMATICALLY
TO SUPPORT THE FEDERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. GOVERNMENT PRESS MAY 9 REPORTS THAT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

HAS FORMED SO-CALLED MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE MUHAMMAD ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-BAKR "TO STUDY NUMBER OF IMPORTANT INTERNAL FEDERAL PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE PREOCCUPIED MINDS OF OFFICIALS RECENTLY AND ESPECIALLY TO LIST UNCONSTITUTIONAL ACTS WHICH MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED IN ANY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SECTORS AND TO RECOMMEND SUITABLE SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME THEM AND THEREBY STRENGTHEN THE FEDERAL ENTITY." FORMATION OF COMMITTEE STATED TO HAVE BEEN DECIDED UPON BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS THREE WEEKS AGO AT MEETING DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO DISCUSSION OF INTERNAL MATTERS AND OF SHZPROBLEMS WHICH HINDER THE FORWARD PROGRESS OF THE FEDERATION, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT HAVE ARISEN IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS." MINSTERIAL COMMITTEE (ACTUALLY COMPOSED OF LEGAL TECHNICIANS) IS TO COMMENCE ITS DELIBERATIONS SHORTLY AND TO REPORT TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WHICH IN TURN WILL PASS REPORT AND ITS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPREME COUNCIL OF RULERS WHICH WILL MEET ESPECIALLY TO CONSIDER THE REPORT.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE IS RESPONSE TO CONTINUING CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS PROVOKED BY FEDERATION PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID'S FEBRUARY 1 DECREE REORGANIZING THE ARMED FORCES AND NAMING HIS SECOND SON SULTAN TO POST OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF (REFTELS A AND B). CONVERSTATION BETWEEN ZAYID AND DUBAI RULER/FEDERATION VICE PRESIDENT SHAIKH RASHID EARLY LAST MONTH FAILED TO HEAL THIS RIFT (REF C). SINCE THEN WE HAVE HEARD FROM DUBAI SOURCES THAT RASHID SENT ZAYID LETTER CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ABU DH 01325 01 OF 02 101422Z

SPECIFICALLY QUESTIONING CONSTITUTIONALITY OF FEBRUARY 1 DECREE AND DEMANDING THAT IT AND NUMBER OF OTHER RECENT ACTIONS BY FEDERAL AUTHORITIES BE EXAMINED TO ASCERTAIN THEIR CONSTITUTIONALITY. IF LETTER EXISTS, (WHICH WE STILL TRYING TO DETERMINE) TEXT HAS BOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND OFFICIALS IN ABU DHABI HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS IT WITH US ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE NOT DENIED ITS EXITANCE. EVEN IF FORMAL LETTER DOES NOT EXIST, CONSENSUS OF INFORMED OPINION IS THAT RASHID SS INSISTENT UPON RELAXATION BY ZAYID OF PRESSURES ON DUBAI AND OTHER EMIRATES TO ACCEPT STRONG FEDERAL AUTHORITY AND UPON RETURN TO RELATIVELY LOOSER CONFEDERAL SYSTEM EXISTING IN FIRST YEARS OF UAE'S INDEPENDENCE. REPORTEDLY THIS WOULD INCLUDE RESTORATION TO INDIVIDUAL EMIRATES OF RIGHT TO MAINTAIN AND CONTROL OWN MILITARY FORCES ALONGSIDE THOSE OF FEDERAL AUTHORITY. OTHER ISSUES INCLUDE TIGHT CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ON IMMIGRATION AND ON TRAVEL BY FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN INTO UAE, ZAYID'S EFFORTS TO COORDINATE AND CONTROL INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS, MOVES TO EXTEND TO OTHER EMIRATES ABU DHABI RESTRICTIONS ON OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND BUSINESSES BY FOREIGNERS, ZY AID'S DEMANDS THAT OTHER RULERS (ESPECIALLY RASHID) CONTRIBUTE GREATER SHARE OF THEIR EMIRATES' REVENUES TO FEDERAL BUDGET, NORTHERN RULERS' COMPLAIN THAT ABU DHABI IS MORE GENEROUS IN GIVING GRANT AID AND CONCESSIONAL LOANS TO

OTHER COUNTRIES THAN IT IS ABOUT INVESTING IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
IN THE OTHER EMIRATES, AND DUBAI'S DESIRE THAT FEDERAL CAPITAL
BE RELOCATED FROM ABU DHABI TO NEW CITY THAT 1971 PROVISIONAL
CONSTITUTION STATES IS TO BE BUILT ON ABU DHABI - DUBAI BOUNDARY.

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PAGE 01 ABU DH 01325 02 OF 02 101427Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1345

4. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ZAYID AND
RASHID ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION IN
DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES AND MAJLISES, ALTHOUGH MORE SO IN DUBAI
THAN IN ABU DHABI. PROMINENT DUBAIANS', INCLUDING UAE
AMBASSADOR TO LONDON AND RASHID'S EMINENCE GRIS, MAHDI
TAJIR, ARE NOW SAID TO BE TALKING OPENLY ABOUT DUBAI'S PROSPECTS
FOR GOING IT ALONE OUTSIDE THE UAE AS A SORT OF GULF HONG KONG.
(ABU DHABIAN RIPOSTE IS THAT GULF'S DJIBOUTI WOULD BE MORE LIKELY
OUTCOME.)

TAJIR IS RUMORED TO HAVE VISITED IRAN ABOUT THREE WEEKS AGO TO
SEE THE SHAH TO SEEK IRANIAN SUPPORT IN EVENT DUBAI PULLED OUT
OF UAE BUT REPORTEDLY WAS GIVEN NO ENCOURAGEMENT. WE UNABLE
CHECK ACCURACY OF STORY BUT TAJIR INCREASINGLY BUTT OF
CRITICISM BY FEDERALISTS WHO BELIEVE HE HAS BACKED AWAY
FROM EARLIER COMMITMENT TO UNION.

5. STORIES OF UAE MALAISE HAVE REACHED FOREIGN PRESS. FOR EXAMPLE,
LONDON WEEKLY ARABIA AND THE GULF IN ITS MAY 8 ISSUE STATES THAT
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PAGE 02 ABU DH 01325 02 OF 02 101427Z

"FOR THE FIRST TIME, POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES TO THE UAE FOR THE EMIRATES ARE BEING ACTIVELY DISCUSSED" AND SPECULATES THAT "THE COLLAPSE OF THE UAE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY." WE CONSIDER THAT STORIES SUGGESTING IMPENDING DISSOLUTION OF FEDERATION ARE PREMATURE. BOTH ZAYID AND RASHID ARE SPARRING FOR ADVANTAGE AND REFERRAL OF CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES TO MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE COULD CONVENIENTLY SERVE BOTH MEN'S INTERESTS BY KEEPING ISSUES ALIVE BUT SUBMERGED IN LEGAL DISPUTATION WHILE THEY MANEUVER AND DICKER TO FIND MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISES. MEANTIME, GOVERNMENT GOES ON, E.G., ALL RULERS RECENTLY APPROVED 1978 FEDERAL BUDGET. ULTIMATELY, WHILE SOME OF THEIR FOLLOWERS MAY SEE PERSONAL, COMMERCIAL, OR OTHER ADVANTAGES TO DIVORCE, WE BELIEVE THAT NEITHER ZAYID NOR RASHID REALLY WISH SEE THEIR 1971 POLITICAL MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE COLLAPSE. MOREOVER, SUAIDS AND SHAH ARE BELIEVED TO SEE SURVIVAL OF POLITICALLY VIABLE FEDERATION TO BE IN THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS AND TO BE LIKELY TO USE THEIR NOT INCONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE WITH RULE TO ASSURE THAT, WHILE NO LOVE MATCH, THE UNION NEVERTHELESS IS PRESERVED IN FORM AND PROBABLY IN SUBSTANCE. PRO-UNIONISTS ARE AWARE OF THIS AND, AS ONE SENIOR FEDERAL OFFICIAL (NEITHER A DUBAIAN NOR AN ABU DHABIAN) HAS SUGGESTED, ARE PREPARED TO SOLICIT THE HELP OF FRIENDLY COUNTRIES "LIKE SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN AND THE US" TO INTERVENE DIPLOMATICALLY TO SUPPORT THE FEDERATION IF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FAILS IN SOLVING THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES TO THE RULERS' SATISFACTION.

6. COMMENT: WE ARE NOT SATISFIED THAT WE KNOW YET ENOUGH ABOUT RASHID'S PURPORTED LETTER AND VARIOUS ISSUES IT HAS RAISED TO MAKE MORE THAN A TENTATIVE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT POLITICAL TENSIONS WITH THE UAE. EMBASSY POUCHING TO NEA/ARP AND INR/RNE SEVERAL MEMCONS TO GIVE FLAVOR OF FEELING OF DIFFERENT

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PAGE 03 ABU DH 01325 02 OF 02 101427Z

OFFICIALS. CLEARER TEMPERATURE OF THESE TENSIONS HAS RISEN SOMEWHAT OVER PAST THREE MONTHS, REVIVING PERENNIAL DOUBTS ABOUT COHESION OF THESE SEVEN SMALL SHAIKHDOMS. WE DO NOT THINK THIS LATEST BOUT OF "SECESSIONIST FEVER" IN DUBAI IS LIKELY TO PROVE FATAL TO THE FEDERAL UNION. HOWEVER, WE ARE WATCHING OUR POLITICAL THERMOMETER CLOSELY AND WILL CONTINUE TO RECORD THE UPS AND DOWNS ON THE PATIENT'S FEVER CHART AS THEY OCCUR.

DICKMAN

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Message Attributes

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